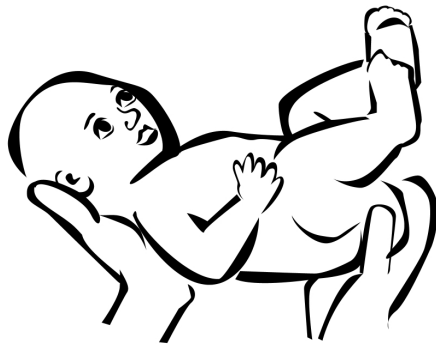




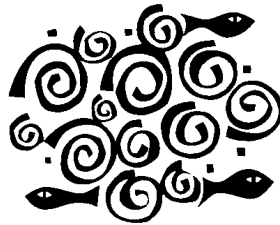
# Infant Baptism



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# Infant Baptism

**B**aptism is incredibly significant. When we deal with baptism we are dealing with something that is very central to the life of the church, -- central because it is one of the commands of Scripture.

In Matthew 28:19 – the verse that’s known as “the Great Commission” Jesus said,  
*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them everything that I have commanded you.”*

So in defining baptism, we can begin with this passage from Matthew. We know that it is something that happens with water, and that it’s done in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The earliest Christian church was a missionary church. It practiced adult baptism – simply because converts came to Christian faith from a Jewish or Pagan background. The issue of baptizing infants only began to arise with the next generation of those Christians, but we do know that by the year AD 215, infant baptism was routinely practiced in the church.

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The Roman theologian, Apolocus, in his work, *The Apostolic Tradition* wrote, “First you should baptize the little ones; all who can speak for themselves should speak, but for those who cannot speak, their parents should speak – or another who belongs to their family.”

Many people will argue that you can trace the baptism of infants back much earlier. But certainly by the year 215, we know that infants were routinely baptized, -- and that in supporting and encouraging the baptism of infants, the church believed that they were reflecting the tradition that had been handed down from the Apostles.

For the first 1600 years, *infant* baptism  
 was the routine method of baptism in  
 the entire Christian Church.

## The Reformation

We know infant baptism was the routine, very early – and remained so for 1500 years. It was not until the 1600’s, during the Anabaptists, that the idea of the adult baptism became normative.

Four movements occurred simultaneously within the period known as ‘the Reformation’:

The first encompassed the Lutheran reforms which took place in Germany. The second was the Reform Movement which centered on the teachings of Calvin and Knox and swept through Switzerland, France, Holland and Germany. It was the third movement, 'the English Reformation,' which birthed the Anglican Church.

The fourth school of thought which came to prominence during the great reform movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17 century was the teaching of the Anabaptists. This group denied the validity of infant baptism. *Ana* means "re" and the group was labelled because they baptized adults who had been baptized as infants: they were "re-baptizers" or *Anabaptists*, (though they generally repudiated the designation, saying the first 'baptism' had not been valid).

When these reformers looked around, they realized that *everyone* had been baptized – absolutely everybody – routinely. They were concerned that many of those who had been baptized had no real faith. Since they knew that we are saved by faith alone, they said, surely we'd have a better church if we'd bring people to faith first and *then* baptize them.

Anabaptists believed that baptism was the way into the church, and that full membership in the church should come *after* one has come to faith. But to this day, in the church throughout the world, the vast majority of Christians practice infant baptism: The Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, the Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, Closed Brethren, Lutherans and Calvinists, all practice infant baptism.

So, in order to come to terms with what baptism means, the question we need to ask is this: "How did the early church come to the conclusion that they should baptize infants?" What was it that motivated them to do that? -- and how did the church manage for 1500 years to maintain such an incredible consensus on this?

We have to ask ourselves what baptism is – and how Scripture understands it and therefore, how we are to understand it.

In the following passages, Paul shows that Baptism is clearly linked to entry into, or membership in, the body of Jesus Christ, – the Church:

We have to ask ourselves  
what baptism *is*  
– and how Scripture  
understands it  
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are to understand it.

### **1 Corinthians 12:13**

*For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

### **Ephesians 4:4**

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

Through baptism, by the Holy Spirit we are drawn into membership in the body of Christ. Baptism answers the question for us, "How am I received into the family of God?"

This can be a challenging idea for anyone who has grown up with the idea that baptism is exclusively related to the issue of making a public profession of faith. This is a radically different understanding of baptism.

When the Anabaptists first introduced the idea of adult baptisms, the service was not intended as a public profession or acknowledgement of faith. They introduced it as the incorporation of the believer, who had made their profession of faith, into the body of the church.

Baptism answers the question, “*How am I received into the family of God?*”

But the Scripture passage that speaks most clearly about baptism, talks about it as something completely unrelated to a statement of faith by the individual and simply as incorporation into the body of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, through the baptism.

Most of the early Christians came out of a Jewish tradition and culture. The way they would have answered the question, “*How do I become a member of the people of God,*” would have been in terms that they recognized from their heritage. And the answer to that question for a Jew was simple: You entered into the family of God by one means – through circumcision.

In **Genesis 17:14**, God says to Abram:

*Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

So for the Jewish males, the sign of being part of God’s people is being circumcised. Women became a part of the people of God when they married. It is one of the significant changes of the New Testament that a woman can become a member of the people of God in her own right.

If we’re going to understand baptism as the early church did, then we need to understand circumcision. And we need to see something of a connection, a parallel between the two.

Paul makes this parallel in **Colossians 2:11-14**

*In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ;<sup>12</sup> when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.<sup>13</sup> And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.*

Paul uses the word ‘baptism’ here in a way that is virtually interchangeable with the word ‘circumcision’ and then he flips back and forth, from one to the other, drawing the two concepts very closely together.

In **Galatians 3:24-29** Paul draws another interesting parallel for us:

*<sup>24</sup> The law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> and if you belong to Christ; then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.*

And that's a glorious reality that Paul holds up for us, -- that we can be clothed with Christ because of our baptism with him: that there is neither Jew nor Greek -- we are all one in Christ. And then he says, "If you belong to Christ -- then you are Abraham's offspring."

This seems a curious thing, that as part of our self-understanding as Christians, Paul would bring in the idea of "the seed of Abraham." But what he is doing in this passage, is drawing the parallel between our life in Christ and the life of the Jew. The family understanding of the Jew and the covenant that was made with Abraham through God was marked, signed and sealed with circumcision in the Old Testament, and by baptism in the New Testament.

In another interesting parallel, Paul also draws a fairly clear indication of the replacement of the Old Testament practice of celebrating the Passover with the New Testament practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper.

### **1 Corinthians 5:7**

*Paul says, Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the festival.*

There were two Old Testament sacraments: Circumcision and Passover. Circumcision had to do with how the Jew became incorporated into the family of God. Passover had to do with how a Jew was redeemed, freed from bondage by the power of God, liberated from Egypt and brought into freedom, to know and serve God.

There are two New Testament sacraments ordained by Christ. Baptism has to do with how a Christian is brought into membership with the family of God, -- the body of Christ. And in the Lord's Supper, Christians are redeemed from bondage, rescued out of slavery to sin and set free to live as God's people, through the person of Jesus Christ -- through his blood.

This suggests that there is a fairly clear link between baptism and circumcision. We find the most significant teaching about circumcision in Genesis 17. Circumcision was the sign given to Abraham, a sign of belonging. And Abraham belongs because of the covenant, and circumcision is given as a sign of that covenant.

**Genesis 17:1, 2** *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.”*

The first thing that is terribly significant about the covenant, is that it is *initiated* by God. This is not a story of Abram wandering around in an existential crisis, wondering how he’s going to find meaning in life, or how he is going to find God.

In his grace and mercy, God reaches down and grabs Abram and makes himself known to him. It’s God’s initiative and it’s God’s mercy.

The first thing that is terribly significant about the covenant, is that it is *initiated* by God.

And that’s one of the critical differences between the Judeo-Christian tradition and essentially any other religious tradition: the focus is always on God reaching to us, rather than us seeking a path to God.

In all eastern mysticism the focus is on seeking a path of enlightenment so that you can raise yourself up to God consciousness. This is not what happens in Christianity. Judaism and Christianity turn that right on its head. God is looking for you – God is seeking you. And the covenant brings that point home very clearly.

In **Genesis 17:6-8** God says,

*“I will make you exceedingly fruitful: and I will make nations of you and kings shall come from you”<sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan for a perpetual holding, and I will be their God”*

So he is looking for a people and he will be their God. God is making himself a people. He establishes this covenant as a means of doing that – and this – as he says, is forever.

### **Jeremiah 31: 31-33**

*The days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the House of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.*

It’s a new covenant in the sense that it is born *within* people now, but it’s the same covenant. *I will be their God and they will be my people.* God is forming and shaping a people and he is doing it by means of establishing a covenant, giving his promise to his people.

Jesus says in **Luke 22:20** at the Last Supper,

*"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."*

The covenant is passed down through history – the same covenant of God seeking a people, to establish them, to form them as his own. And as we've seen in Genesis:17:9 – 10, the *covenant* is very closely connected with the *sign*

God said to Abraham,

*"As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."*

Circumcision is the sign and it's also the covenant. The two are used virtually interchangeably in verse 10. Much later in church history in the Christian tradition that becomes very relevant in our understanding of what it means to have a sacrament. A sacrament is a sign – but it is a sign of something that takes place inside and as it is a *sign* of what takes place inside, it also *causes* that to happen.

In our Anglican Book of Common Prayer, there is something called "The Catechism" and the Catechist asks, *"What do you mean by this word Sacrament?" "I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given to us by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive this grace and a pledge to assure us thereof."* (p.550)

In Genesis 17: God says, -- here's the sign, *and* here's what it's a sign of.

In our Anglican Prayer Book in the Articles of Religion it says,

*"Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him."* (Article XXV, p. 707)

In **1 Peter 3:18-21** Peter says, this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also:

*"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive the spirit,<sup>19</sup> in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,<sup>20</sup> who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water.<sup>21</sup> And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Circumcision made the covenant happen for the infant born into a Jewish family and in some sense, baptism also has a role in making happen that which it symbolizes. You are dealing with a sign that causes to happen that which it signifies.

In Genesis 17:14, we see that the external sign is so important that the *absence* of that external sign, means that the person is no longer numbered among the people of God. If circumcision is missing, God says a man will be cut off from his people. He has broken my commandment. And that's interesting because it would have been done on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. The onus was upon the parents.

The question of what God really wants from his people. God wanted them to perform the sign, but why was the sign so important?

In Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Scripture tells us:

*“And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.”*

These attributes are all internal. In verse 16 of that same chapter, (Deut 10) we are told: *“Circumcise then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer.”*

Circumcision is used here as a metaphor of what is happening on the inside. The external sign – which causes something to happen is now also internal. It is the sign of something that occurs within the heart.

A child could receive the external sign – on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of his life – and not grow up to love, serve and obey God. So that the mere fact of the imposition of the external sign is not a guarantee of the inner reality for which the sign stands. Although the sign works in the sense of incorporation into the family, it may not be an external indication of that inner reality having taken place: you could have the sign and not have the heart for God.

### **Deuteronomy 30: 6**

*The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.*

So to be a child of God in the fullest Biblical sense required two things – the external sign – the relationship with the people – which is done through man- a human decision of the parents – and an internal circumcision of the heart - and that's a work of God.

### **James 5:14-15**

*Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up*

There is something for the human being to do – a physical sign – anointing with oil and then there's the internal thing that takes place – the answer to the prayer the Lord will raise him up. So there's man's action – combined with God's action – which makes something

happen. In both cases- in the case of circumcision and here in the case of healing, the human actor is not the one who is receiving the action.

It doesn't say, "is any one of you sick, he should anoint himself with oil." It says you should call other people to anoint him with oil and have them pray. And it is the same with circumcision; – the 8-day-old infant doesn't circumcise himself. You bring someone else to do that and then God fulfills that through an internal action of the heart.

### **Jeremiah 9:25**

*The days are surely coming says the Lord when I attend to all those who are circumcised only in the foreskin. Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaven temples who live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.*

Clearly he's indicating here, it's possible to have received the outward sign as a child of God, to be an inheritor of all those covenant blessings and still not have that inward change of heart –that *circumcision of the heart*.

Down through the ages, this has been a critical problem. we have come to trust the external sign, and in trusting the external sign we have lost the importance of what takes place within. In the New Testament it is very evident that the really important work is what happens *inside* the believer

In **Romans 2 .28** Paul has the audacity to say:

*A man is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.*

The important thing is the inner transformation of the heart and that is a work of God. It is not something we can do in or of ourselves. What man can do – the human part, is to bring another person, by birth, into that covenant relationship with God. That's what the Jew could do. He would bring his little boy – into covenant relationship with God – as part of their family, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, by bringing him to be circumcised. Having done that they have incorporated him as a good little Jewish boy into the family of God's people. The inner transformation of the heart is something that God must do in that child at a later date. Only God can effect inner transformation.

In **Titus 3:4, 5** we see again that there is something God does and there is something man does.

**The important thing is the inner transformation of the heart and that is a work of God.**

*When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

So there's washing of rebirth, a reference to baptism and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Something man does - the washing, and something God does - renewal by the Holy Spirit.

In the Titus passage – in understanding of infant baptism, man's part has been done, so the child is an inheritor of the kingdom of God and whether the child enters into that inheritance or not awaits an ultimate and final seal of the Holy Spirit. There's a time between – – as there was with the circumcised infant – God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. There's a time between a time between the external sign being given and the internal reality being realized in the life of any particular individual.

What we've established so far is that in the mind of the early Christian, coming from their Jewish background they would have seen a very immediate and logical connection between the sign of baptism and the sign of circumcision because both dealt with how you got into the family of God's people, how you became a member, in one case the family of Abraham, in the other family of God, the body of Jesus Christ.

Also that there is an external sign that needs ultimately to correspond to an internal reality, and that the two do not come simultaneously, the one being done at 8 days, and the other being done in God's good time as a person grows into faith.

That understanding is extended as you realize, and look a bit at the way the Jew understood the family. They had a tremendous sense of the family unit, a sense that we lack, because we live in a very individualistic culture where individualism is raised up as an ultimate good.

It is fascinating to discover that when a person converted to Judaism, there were 3 things that that person had to do:

Book of **Acts 16:15** story of Lydia

*When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home."*

Further on **Acts 16:33**

*(The jailer) At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay.*

– when you reflect back on the Jewish understanding of conversion, family washing, incorporating the whole family, when you think about the practice of circumcision they would be familiar, being administered to infants who would have no understanding or comprehension of what happened.

We see this pattern in the New Testament

**Acts 11: 14**

*Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter, he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.*

Again that sense of the incorporation of the whole family of it being a unit – all of them functioning together.

In **1 Corinthians 1: 16** Paul is running through his mind who he has baptized, he says

*I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.*

So there is that sense that you function as a unit, you function as a body and the body is the family and there were all baptized together. In the ancient world when the head of the family acted, he did so for the whole family. The family faith was there as a result of what happened in the head of the family.

Take the example of writing a cheque – say, I give you a cheque for a million dollars, but if you tuck it away in a pocket for the rest of your life, it does no good what so ever. You must personally sign it. Infant baptism is that sign, that pledge, that covenant of God extended to you by virtue of the fact that you are born into a family of faith and therefore into the people of God who sign you with that sign of new birth through baptism and the sign of the cross made on the child's forehead that says this is a covenant child. This child is born to the people of God, into the family of God, and receives the external sign at this point to make this real and will later sign the cheque for themselves. so that it then becomes real in the heart as well as on the outside.

### **1 Peter 3:21**

*“And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

What the verse does indicate is that baptism *causes* something to happen and that something is fulfilled as the heart is changed.

The heart issue is not between us, it is between the individual and God. The physical, external issue is with us. That's our decision, that's a human action which God honours.

Infant baptism focus stresses 2 things: it stresses the objectivity of the Gospel, that we are saved, not primarily because of something we do. The danger in the believer's baptism is that you can almost come to the point of saying, “I have saved myself.” and there is a real awkwardness about that. In infant baptism understanding, when someone says to you, “when were you saved.” It is very legitimate at one level to say, well I was saved in AD 33, when Jesus died on a cross for my sins – that took place and I must acknowledge that and accept that by faith in my life: but that it is God who is really at work

### **2 Tim 1:8 & 9**

*rely on the power of God who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace*

The passage talks about God choosing, God calling – the initiative is with God. and that's the second thing so clearly stressed, that God takes the initiative in calling people to himself and we acknowledge that this is an infant born into Gods family and God is reaching out to that child and into a special relationship because when you have a child, born into a family of faith, when are you going to say that that child *becomes* a Christian? I cannot look at my two little girls, who are 6 and 4 and say, they are not Christians. They have a very real relationship to Jesus Christ.

you put yourself on an insecure grounding then because if it did depend on feeling – or your decision – or it being done in the right way you have to say well – did I feel right? Was I holy enough at that point? Where as in the infant baptism you can say I was incorporated into the family of God I can look back to that event I know it happened. It speaks to me of God's objective, sovereign love and His call upon my life.

What about the children who do not have that? Are they missing being called into that special relationship?

The Anglican Church believes, -- and the Jew would have believed – that if you don't have the sign of circumcision – you are cut off from the people of God. The Jew clearly believed that without the sign you lacked that incorporation into the family of God.

The thing you have to struggle with is, – 'what is the status of the child prior to that baptism'

In the Anabaptist tradition you do not become a member of the church until Baptism

The thing you have to struggle with as an Anabaptist is, – 'what is the status of the child prior to that baptism' and I'm not sure what the status of the child is – are they half a believer? Or are they a whole believer in waiting? It's very difficult. For my children at this point in their lives they are fully members of the body of Christ, of the people of God. And at whatever level they understand it, they have made a very real profession of faith at their understanding level. They may slide back from that, they may lose something of that, but at this point in their lives they are every bit as much Christian, faithful believer as I am

It is not man's job to decide who does -- and who does not, come to Communion. It is man's job to decide who is and who is not within the covenant community of the believers of the church, of the body of Christ of the people of God. We decide that we are given that power that decision is made by individual families. Having made that decision, then all individual members who are within that covenant blessing are free to come and receive the family meal. As they are able, as they willing and as they are desirous of doing so.

There are two criteria – that you have membership in the body of Christ *and* that you have faith in the person of Jesus Christ. We can decide the one, but we can't decide the other. It is artificial to try to put any criteria in place that puts us in the position of God.

Scripture is very clear that baptism is vitally important and if the meaning of baptism is, as Scripture seems to indicate that it is, then it is linked so closely to the receiving of the Lord's Supper that it is difficult to separate the two. These two external, physical signs were ordained by Christ.

### **There are three things clearly signified by infant baptism:**

1. The continuity of the Jewish tradition, (focuses on membership in the people of God). This was critical to the Jew and it is critical to the Christian. The Jewish "unit of faith" idea, was clearly true for early Christians. We read of households of faith being saved – families being baptized. Faith comes to families.

2. The objectivity of the Gospel.

Salvation is not primarily dependent upon faith but is dependent upon the mercy of God

### 3. The initiative of God

Which comes right at the very earliest chapters of the Old Testament in Genesis when God is walking in the Garden – saying, “Adam where are you.” God is calling to himself his people. He is reaching out. He is grasping our children and calling them to himself and we acknowledge that in Baptism.

People say – well there is no personal statement of faith present when an infant is baptized. The infant does not make a statement of faith. But there is a statement of faith on the part of parents, there’s a statement of faith on the part of the community who are gathered and who are asked by the person officiating. The community *is* asked (see the Baptism Liturgy, below) The Celebrant asks, “Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support this person in his life in Christ?”

When a family comes to ask about baptism, I explain to them about being incorporated in the family of faith and the absolute dependence upon the parental faith in order for that to happen, And then I say, if that is your intention, to be a family of faith, to nurture this child in the Christian faith, to make that statement and to live by it, then baptism is obviously right and proper and we’ll see you on Sunday – and every Sunday from now on.

If that is not your intention, then you’re standing up in front of a congregation and before God and you’re lying.

The only models we have of believer’s baptism in the New Testament are instant. You believed – and you were baptized. Right on the spot! In the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in **Acts 8:26-38**, or the Philippian jailer. They immediately acknowledged the connection and said, ‘I am now a part of something bigger than myself’ God drawing in you into relationship.

Our problem, as North American – westerners is that we believe that it’s “me and Jesus.” The Jew and the early Christian believed that it was “me and Jesus—and everybody else.” – who is in relationship to Jesus – and that we belong together – we are brothers and sisters and we are part of a family. And so to be “re-born in the spirit” in relationship to Jesus Christ and not be “re-born” into the family of God’s people was a contradiction. It didn’t make sense to the ancient mind. You were immediately re-born into a web of new relationships. Acknowledgement of that in the Old Testament was circumcision and the sign, the acknowledgement of that, that made it real in the New Testament, was Baptism.

For the first Christian there was no instruction, no catechism, no further hoops that you had to jump through in order to be baptized. Baptism has nothing to do with a rational apprehension of anything, it has to do with being born into the family of God.

Peter tells us that baptism saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and baptism is a *new birth*. This is in perfect harmony with the rest of the scriptures. Paul explains how the resurrection and baptism tie together:

One cannot teach baptism correctly without teaching that Jesus rose from the dead. It is through *baptism* that we become united with Christ in His death and consequently also in his

*resurrection*. To reject baptism, is to personally reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And to reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to reject Him as the Son of God. Therefore, if we deny baptism, we deny Christ from raising us from death.

The term “gospel” is a Greek term and simply means “good news”. Notice that passages in the New Testament relating to non-Christians being taught the Gospel, or, the “Word of the Lord”, always teach or illustrate, in the very same breath, that baptism is the correct response to this good news.

But the real issue here isn't baptism. The real issue at hand is the *gospel* and whether we believe it. If baptism is a part of the gospel and we reject this message, we fall under condemnation because we do not believe the message God has given us. If the Bible says we have to be baptized to be saved and we do not believe this, we do not believe the Word of the Lord and will be condemned as an unbeliever. That is why Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not *believe* will be condemned.”

2 Thessalonians 1 says we must obey the gospel or we will be lost. So, how does one “*obey the gospel*”? How does one obey the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—an event that happened 2,000 years ago? Only by God’s grace, -- He allows us, even today, to participate in this historical event that took place centuries ago.

# Holy Baptism

## The Gathering of the Community

*All stand. The presiding celebrant greets the community.*

*Celebrant*     The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
                    and the love of God  
                    and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
                    be with you all.

*People*        **And also with you.**

*Celebrant*     There is one body and one Spirit,

*People*        **There is one hope in God's call to us;**

*Celebrant*     One Lord, one faith, one baptism

*People*        **One God and Father of all.**

## The Collect of the Day

*Celebrant*     Let us pray.

*The community may pray silently. The presiding celebrant then says the collect, after which all respond, Amen*

## The Proclamation of the Word

### The Reading(s)

### Sermon

## Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

*Sponsor*       **I present *N* to receive the sacrament of baptism**

*The celebrant asks each candidate when presented,*  
                    Do you desire to be baptized?

*Candidate*     **I do**

## Infants and Younger Children

*Then the candidates unable to answer for themselves are presented individually by their parents and sponsors as follows:*

*Parents and sponsors,*

**I present *N* to receive the sacrament of baptism**

*When all have been presented the celebrant asks the parents and sponsors,*  
                    Will you be responsible for seeing that the child  
                    you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the  
                    Christian community?

***Parents and sponsors,***  
**I will, with God's help**

*Celebrant* Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

***Parents and sponsors,***  
**I will, with God's help**

*Celebrant* Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

***Parents and sponsors,***  
**I will, with God's help**

*Then the celebrant asks the following questions of the candidates who can speak for themselves, and of the parents and sponsors who speak on behalf of the infants and younger children.*

*Question* Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

***Answer*** I renounce them.

*Question* Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

***Answer*** I renounce them.

*Question* Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

***Answer*** I renounce them.

*Question* Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Saviour?

***Answer*** I do.

*Question* Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

***Answer*** I do.

*Question* Do you promise to obey him as your Lord?

***Answer*** I do.

### **Prayers for the Candidates**

*The celebrant then says to the congregation,*

Let us now pray for *these persons* who *are* to receive the sacrament of new birth.

*A person appointed leads the following litany.*

Leader Deliver *them*, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Open *their hearts* to your grace and truth.  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Fill *them* with your holy and life-giving Spirit.  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Teach *them* to love others in the power of the Spirit  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Send *them* into the world in witness to your love  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory  
 People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*The leader concludes,*

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. **Amen**

## **The Celebration of Baptism**

### **Thanksgiving over the Water**

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Celebrant We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Now sanctify this water by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who are here cleansed from sin and born again, may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

To him, to you, and now to the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and forever. **Amen**

## The Baptism

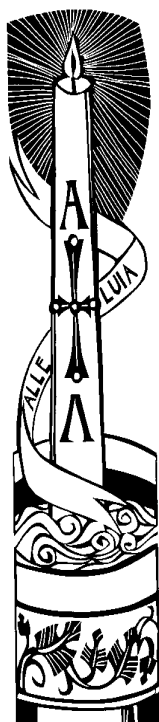
*Each candidate is presented by name to the celebrant, who then immerses, or pours water upon, the candidates, saying,*

*N,* I baptize you in the name of the Father, and  
of the son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*The celebrant makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each one saying to each,*  
I sign you with the cross and mark you as Christ's own for ever.

*The celebrant, at a place in the full sight of the congregation, prays over the newly baptized saying,*

Heavenly Father,  
we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit  
you have bestowed upon these your servants  
the forgiveness of sin,  
and have raised them to the new life of grace.  
Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give  
them an inquiring and discerning heart, the  
courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know  
and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder  
in all your works.  
**Amen.**



## The Giving of the Light

*One of the ministers may then give to each of the newly baptized a lighted candle, saying,*  
Receive the light of Christ,  
to show that you have passed from darkness to light.

*When all of the newly baptized have received candles, the people say,*

**Let your light so shine before others  
that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**

Celebrant    Let us welcome the newly baptized.

People        **We receive you into the household of God.  
Confess the faith of Christ crucified,  
proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his resurrection.**

## Index of Scripture passages relating to Baptism

<i>Commanded by Christ</i>	Matthew 28:19,20 Mark 16:15,16
<i>Belonging to Christ</i>	Ephesians 4:5
<i>Our journey from slavery to freedom</i>	1 Corinthians 10: 1-4
<i>A washing away of sin</i>	1 Corinthians 6:11 1 Peter 3:21 Acts 2:38-41 Acts 22:16 Titus 3: 4-8
<i>Baptism of the cross dying with Christ, rising into his resurrection</i>	Luke 12:50 Romans 6:3-5 1 Corinthians 12:13 Colossians 2:12 Galatians 3:26-27
<i>Baptism of Holy Spirit &amp; Fire:</i>	Matthew 3:11 Luke 3:16
Nicodemus	John 3: 3-5
<i>visualized by the spirit's descent</i>	John 1:32,33 Acts 10:44-48 Titus 3:5
<i>Baptism of Jesus</i>	John 1: Acts 1:4-8
<i>Baptism of John</i>	- of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Acts 19:3 Mark 1:4 Luke 3:3
<i>Baptism of believers</i>	Mark 16:15-16 Acts 8:12
Ethiopian eunuch	Acts 8:35-38
Lydia	Acts 16:12-15
Jailer & household	Acts 16:30-33
on behalf of the dead	1 Corinthians 15:29

### **120-205 AD Irenaeus**

As we are lepers in sin, we are made clean from our old transgressions by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord. We are thus spiritually regenerated as newborn infants, even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

(*Irenaeus, "Fragments From Lost Writings", no. 34, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pg. 574*)

### **150-200 AD Clement**

"you will perhaps say, 'What does the baptism of water contribute towards the worship of God?' In the first place: because that which hath pleased God is fulfilled.

In the second place: because when you are regenerated and born again of water and of God, the frailty of your former birth, which you have through men, is cut off, and so at length you shall be able to attain salvation; but otherwise it is impossible. For thus hath the true prophet testified to us with an oath: 'Verily I say to you, That unless a man is born again of water, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Therefore make haste; for there is in these waters a certain power of mercy which was borne upon them at the beginning, and acknowledges those who are baptized under the name of the threefold sacrament, and rescues them from future punishments, presenting as a gift to God the souls that are consecrated by baptism. Betake yourselves therefore to these waters.

(*Clement, "Recognitions of Clement," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 8, pg. 155*)

### **200 AD Hermas**

"And I said, 'I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place when we descended into the water and received remission of our former sin.' He said to me, 'That was sound doctrine which you heard; for that is really the case.'"

(*Hermas, "The Shepherd," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, pg. 22*)

### **203 AD Tertullian**

"Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. . . we, little fishes after the example of our ikhthus [Great] Fish, Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water." (Baptism 1).

### **382 AD Gregory of Nyssa**

"[In] the birth by water and the Spirit, [Jesus] himself led the way in this birth, drawing down upon the water, by his own baptism, the Holy Spirit; so that in all things he became the first-born of those who are spiritually born again, and gave the name of brethren to those who partook in a birth like to his own by water and the Spirit" (*Against Eunomius 2:8*).

### **Hippolytus**

"Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them" (*The Apostolic Tradition 21:16 A.D. 215*).

### **Origen**

"The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine sacraments, knew there are in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit" (*Commentaries on Romans* 5:9 [A.D. 248]).

### **Cyprian of Carthage**

"If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does he [an infant] approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another".

### **Gregory of Nazianz**

"Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit.!"  
(*Oration on Holy Baptism* 40:7 AD 388).

### **John Chrysostom**

"You see how many are the benefits of baptism, and some think its heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins, but we have enumerated ten honors [it bestows]! For this reason we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by [personal] sins, so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his [Christ's] members"  
(*Baptismal Catecheses in Augustine, Against Julian* 1:6:21 AD 388).

### **Augustine**

"What the universal Church holds, not as instituted [invented] by councils but as something always held, is most correctly believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority. Since others respond for children, so that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete for them, it is certainly availing to them for their consecration, because they themselves are not able to respond" (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 4:24:31 AD 400).

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic" (*The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39 A.D. 408]).

If I could tell you what this meant  
this three fold phrase, this fluid touch  
this moment sanctified by promise,  
you in your distraction  
would certainly dismiss it.  
and I, the priest who dried your head  
then lit a candle for remembrance,  
might realize again some things are taught  
but others are best lived and learned  
as is most discernment  
Still, something happened on this day

of such great simplicity,  
it might pass by unrecognized  
clearly there was not birth and death  
with human severance and pain.  
But portals opened that are unseen  
and forces moved to befriend your soul.  
You were enrolled into God  
This may seem a small thing  
in the surety of youth,  
but trust as those who brought you here:  
there is nothing more!

*Penelope Duckworth*  
*reprinted from Christian Century Feb 7, 1996*